

Message Text

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SUBJECT: BUILDING MATERIALS AND CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT TRADE FAIR

REF: USDOC 12586

1. EMBOFF SPOKE TO ABDULLAH AL-GAIN, DIRECTOR OF JIDDA AIRPORT ON 31 AUGUST 1975 AND WAS INFORMED THAT HRH PRINCE SULTAN, MINISTER OF DEFENSE AND AVIATION, HAS GIVEN HIS APPROVAL FOR THE HOLDING OF FAIR MENTIONED REFTEL.

2. ONLY OBSTACLE REMAINING IS OBTAINING OF APPROVAL FOR FAIR FROM MUHAMMAD AL-'AWADI, MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY. MR. SHIRL MCARTHUR, EMBASSY REPRESENTATIVE ON THE SAUDI/AMERICAN JOINT ECONOMIC COMMISSION IN RIYADH, WILL MEET WITH MINISTER AL-'AWADI IN ORDER TO EXPEDITE FINAL APPROVAL PROCESS. EMBASSY HOPES THAT AL-'AWADI WILL GRANT HIS SPEEDY APPROVAL FOR FAIR.

3. EMBASSY WISHES TO REQUEST THAT COMMERCE GIVE URGENT ATTENTION TO SUGGESTION THAT HOMES BE BUILT ON UNITED STATES EMBASSY COMPOUND. HAVING THESE HOUSING UNITS ON COMPOUND WOULD CAUSE MINOR INCONVENIENCE TO COMPANY REPRESENTATIVES. THE BENEFITS TO BE GAINED, HOWEVER, FAR OUTWEIGH THE MINOR INCONVENIENCE TO BE SUFFERED BY COMPANY SALES PERSONNEL. BY PLACING THE HOMES ON "PRIVATE" I.E., DIPLOMATIC SOIL, THEY WILL APPEAL TO THE SAUDI SENSE OF ELITISM. THE AVERAGE SAUDI MALE WOULD NOT HESITATE TO BRING HIS WIFE TO AN EMBASSY DISPLAY AREA, BUT WOULD HARDLY

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EXPOSE HER TO THE VULGAR, HURLY-BURLY OF THE AIRPORT FAIR

SITE. THIS ESPECIALLY TRUE OF MIDDLE-CLASS SAUDIS; IN ORDER TO SUCCESFULLY SELL AMERICAN PRODUCTS IN HE EXTREMELY COMPETITIVE MARKET OF SAUDI ARABIA, ONE MUST APPEAL TO THE EGO OF THE SAUDI CONSUMER. NOTHING WOULD WORK BETTER THAN CONVINCING HIM THAT THE PRODUCT IS CONSIDERED SUITABLE FOR USE BY THE AMERICAN FAMILY, I.E., EMBASSY PERSONNEL.

4. ANOTHER FACTOR WHICH WILL PLAY A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN IN THE "SALE" OF THESE MODEL HOMES IS THE LEVEL OF EXPOSURE THEY RECEIVE IN THE LOCAL PRESS. USIS INTENDS TO SUPPORT THE FAIR, BUT WOULD BE ABLE TO PLACE SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON THOSE HOUSING UNITS WHICH WERE GOING TO BE OCCUPIED BY THE EMBASSY. USIS WOULD DESCRIBE THEM AS PROOF OF THE BICENTENNIAL SPIRIT THAT STILL BURNS IN AMERICA. HOUSES CONSTRUCTED ON THE FAIR SITE MUST BE TORN DOWN, WHILE THOSE BUILT ON THE EMBASSY COMPOUND WOULD REMAIN AS A CONTINUING DISPLAY OF AMERICAN TECHNOLOGY.

5. TRANSPORTATION BETWEEN FAIR SITE AND EMBASSY PRESENTS NO PROBLEM. THE SAUDI MIDDLE CLASS IS BECOMING NOTICEABLY MOBILE. BUSES WILL BE EASILY LAID ON BY PRIVATE SAUDIS AND TAXIS ARE CHEAP AND PLENTIFUL.

6. EMBASSY WISHES TO REPEAT ITS APPEAL TO THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE TO SEND A REPRESENTATIVE TO JIDDA ASAP TO BEGIN THE LAYING OF THE GROUNDWORK OF THE FAIR. THE MORE THOROUGHLY WE COMPLETE OUR INITIAL PREPARATIONS, THE GREATER THE LIKELIHOOD OF SUCCESS FOR THE FAIR. EMBASSY ECON/COMMERCIAL STAFF IS SIMPLY TOO SMALL TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE SUPPORT AND WILL BE DECIMATED IN SEPTEMBER BY HOME LEAVE OF ONE OFFICER AND OFFICIAL TRAVEL TO U.S. OF ANOTHER.
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